



Living Healthy Working Well

The Five Stages Of Grief

Grief is a powerful emotion. Although normally associated with the death of a loved one, grief can accompany any type of loss, including a divorce or loss of a job. This newsletter outlines the stages of grief and identifies coping strategies to help you move on with your life.

The Grieving Process

Grieving is the emotional process that helps us heal after we experience a major loss. It allows us to gradually cope with the loss and helps us accept changes that are out of our control. The grieving process generally consists of five stages: denial, anger/guilt, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Denial

In the first stage of grief, it is often hard to accept that a loss has taken place. Immediately, you may feel a sense of numbness and disbelief. You may even experience physical reactions, such as feeling faint or nauseated. These are all natural reactions that allow you to distance yourself from the loss. These reactions actually protect us from being overwhelmed by the emotions we are experiencing.

To help yourself through this stage, surround yourself with friends and family. Loved ones will want to help you through this difficult time, so don't hesitate to accept their offers to assist you with everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping.

Anger/Guilt

As you try to come to terms with your loss, you may lash out at others or blame yourself. You might also be angry with friends or family for not understanding what you are experiencing. Feelings of regret for things you said or did in the past are also common.

To cope with these emotions, remind yourself that your feelings are normal reactions to a loss. Talking about your anger, guilt, sadness, anxiety, helplessness, and loneliness is an important part of the healing process.

Bargaining

During the third stage of the grieving process, you may make final attempts to avoid the reality of your loss. You may find yourself saying things like "I'd give anything to have him or her back."

During this period, you should continue to accept your emotions. Rely on those around you who will listen to your concerns. You may want to contact local support groups so that you can talk with others who are experiencing similar emotions. Talking about your feelings will help you move forward on the path to acceptance.

Depression

As you begin to accept the reality of the situation, you may feel a sense of isolation, loneliness, and sadness. These feelings are normal and important reactions to a loss. Accompanying these emotions may be sleeplessness, loss of appetite, overeating, and fatigue.

To cope with your sad feelings, try spending time with others and participating in activities that you enjoy. Remind yourself that feeling depressed is a sign that you have begun the healing process.

Acceptance

When you can talk openly about the changes in your life and think about happy memories, you have reached the final stage in the grieving process. You have now come to terms with your loss and can begin to reestablish a sense of balance in your life.

There will undoubtedly be annual events along the way that will rekindle your grief. Continue seeking support from family and friends during these times. You may also want to seek comfort in photographs and letters that remind you of the past.

Why Is It Important To Grieve?

Grief is a natural emotional response to a loss in your life. It is important to remember that the grieving process is complicated and that it will be different for everyone. The amount of time it takes to move through the different stages will vary from person to person. The way you cope with your loss may depend on the circumstances and the extent of your loss. Sudden deaths, especially accidents or suicide, or the loss of a child are among the most difficult losses to accept.

Finally, going through all five stages of the grieving process is necessary for healing to begin. Some people view crying and sadness as a sign of weakness. Those who think they “need to be strong” or try to sidestep any of the phases are only postponing their recovery.

Remember...

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to you and your eligible dependents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As part of your EAP, you now have access to MagellanAssist. Visit today at <http://www.dpa.ca.gov/benefits/other/eap/Assist.shtm>

Helping Others Through Grief

Watching those around us suffer a significant loss can leave us feeling helpless and frustrated. Below are some tips for helping someone through the grieving process.

Be there to listen—Those who are suffering from a loss may need someone to listen. Make yourself available and encourage them to talk about their feelings.

Avoid clichés—Be sensitive during this time. Expressions such as “things will get better” or “time heals all wounds” may come across as insincere. Acknowledge the person’s need to be sad and angry, and try to encourage them to talk.

Offer a helping hand—Initially, it may be hard for a person to cope with the everyday responsibilities of life. Offering assistance with little things, such as grocery shopping, mowing the lawn, or preparing a home-cooked meal are wonderful ways to show you care.

Have patience—The grieving process is different for everyone. And it is very common for people to have setbacks along the way. You can help those around you by continuing to show your support even months and years following the loss.